



**Report to the Legislative Assembly  
for the Australian Capital Territory**

**Performance In  
Indigenous Education**



**Eighth Report covering the period  
1 SEPTEMBER 2003 TO 29 FEBRUARY 2004**

**REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
EIGHTH REPORT ON PERFORMANCE IN INDIGENOUS  
EDUCATION**

**CONTENTS**

<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Within Reach of Us All, Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Commitments .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overcoming racism and valuing diversity .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Policy .....	5
Cultural Awareness.....	6
Overcoming Racism .....	6
<b>Forming genuine and on-going partnerships with Indigenous communities .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB).....	7
School Boards and Committees .....	7
Indigenous Education Compact .....	8
Other involvement .....	8
<b>Creating safe, supportive, welcoming and culturally inclusive educational and     service environments.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Dare to Lead.....	9
NAIDOC Student of the Year.....	10
Local Resources .....	10
Support for transition .....	11
<b>Indigenous children and young people achieving outcomes equitable to the total     population .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Entry to School Assessment .....	11
Early Childhood Education.....	12
English as a Second Language (ESL).....	13
Literacy and Numeracy.....	13
Year 10 and Year 12 retention and certification.....	16

Student Pathways Planning.....	16
Vocational Education and Training .....	17
Post School Options.....	18
Enhanced Indigenous Support Program.....	18
Students at risk.....	19
Attendance .....	19
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>20</b>



*This photograph shows the pathway from the carpark at Evatt Primary School to a meeting place. Painted rivers and streams follow pathways through the rejuvenated native gardens to waterholes.*

*Thank you to Narrabundah Primary School and Evatt Primary School for the photographs used in this report. Parents/carers have given permission for the images of their children to be used in this report*

## Overview

This report is the eighth in a series presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Indigenous education.

Currently 2.5% of Government school students identify as Indigenous.

The outcomes of the 2003 ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) show a very pleasing improvement in the overall literacy results of Indigenous students. However, this outcome needs to be treated with some caution. The small number of Indigenous students in each year level means that the movement of one student can change the percentage results significantly. The percentages of years 3 and 5 Indigenous students performing at or above the National Benchmarks in Reading and Numeracy are still below the percentages for other students.

Cultural awareness training continued to have a strong focus during the reporting period, especially in the preschool sector.

The extension of the Koori Preschool Program into the Narrabundah Early Childhood Centre has had positive outcomes with an increase from the beginning of 2003 enrolment of 71 to a peak of 108 in the August 2003 census. 72 children are enrolled in preschool programs at the beginning of 2004 and it is hoped that a similar increase as in 2003 will occur in 2004.

Attention is drawn to the comparison of some of the important characteristics of Indigenous persons in the ACT with those elsewhere in Australia. This data is from the *ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002*. This comparison shows the ACT is above the national average in all aspects of education attainment.

The redevelopment of Birrigai is providing valuable opportunities to strengthen links with the Indigenous community and to support the education of Indigenous students, especially those who are at risk.

## **Within Reach of Us All, Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004**

The *Within Reach of Us All, Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004* was launched in 2002. Key initiatives in the plan address these commitments:

- Overcoming racism and valuing diversity;
- Forming genuine and on-going partnerships with Indigenous communities;
- Creating safe, supportive, welcoming and culturally inclusive educational and service environments; and
- Indigenous children and young people achieving outcomes equitable to the total population.

The Action Plan is available from the publications section of the ACT Department of Education and Training website: <http://www.det.act.gov.au/>. This report addresses each of these commitments.

## Commitments

### Overcoming racism and valuing diversity

#### Policy

ACT government schools have a clear framework for action aimed at eliminating racism and valuing diversity in all work environments and school communities. This framework is represented in the action plans, policy and initiatives that have been devised to guide schools and the department.

The ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services launched the *Equity and Diversity Plan 2003-05* in August 2003. The plan recognises that integrating equity and diversity practices into core departmental activity contributes positively to the productivity of all staff.

One of the three key result areas of the plan focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's employment. The two main objectives of this key result area are to:

- increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians;
- develop the capacity of our workforce to understand and respond to the cultural, educational and social needs of Indigenous people.

During the period of this report there was an increase in the number of Indigenous employees from 35 to 36. There are 10 Indigenous teachers in ACT government schools, one being a high school principal. The department is constantly reviewing its employment practices to identify and eliminate any possible systemic bias that may impede Indigenous employment.

*Building our Community - the Canberra Social Plan*, released in February 2004, is guiding policy and decision making about enhancing outcomes for Indigenous students. The indicators specific to the priority of the ACT leading Australia in education, lifelong learning and training are especially relevant to Indigenous students. The outcomes achieved in the reporting period are consistent with the key progress indicators under this priority.

*National Sorry Day was commemorated at Narrabundah Primary School with the raising of the three flags, Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. The school's dance group the Bundah Booris performed for the audience of parents, friends and visitors. The special guest was Patrick Dodson who was in town to deliver the ANU inaugural Reconciliation lecture at Parliament House on Tuesday night. Patrick spoke to the children about their role in the reconciliation process; how they should look after their mates and appreciate them. He had the audience of children and adults spellbound telling stories from his country around Broome. Patrick is a Yawuru man.*

### Cultural Awareness

The department provides Indigenous cultural awareness training and multicultural awareness training to both teachers and administrative staff. Highlights for the period September 2003 to February 2004 included:

- A session on inclusive practices for Indigenous students for all new school-based administrative staff and building services officers at their induction days
- Indigenous cross-cultural awareness training of staff was included by one primary school as part of the development of their school numeracy plan to ensure the plan was inclusive of all students
- Indigenous cross cultural awareness component as part of the training for school-based Anti-Racism Contact Officers.
- Twenty four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Contact (ATSIEC) teachers from primary schools, high schools and colleges (including one special school) attended a series of three professional learning sessions. These sessions focused on improving their knowledge of the Department of Education, Science and Technology's (DEST) Indigenous specific programs; improving their knowledge of ACT Indigenous community resources; acquiring cross cultural communication skills to enhance liaison with Indigenous students and their families; and acquiring knowledge of strategies to develop inclusive perspectives across the curricula.
- In January 2004 approximately 240 preschool teachers and assistants, as part of their professional development program, participated in an Indigenous cultural awareness training session.

### Overcoming Racism

The *Combating Racism in Schools and the Workplace* policy requires each school to appoint at least one Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) for students. All schools have implemented this requirement and these officers receive training in current legislation, responding to complaints including discrimination and vilification issues, recording and resolving complaints with students.

The MAZE administration system used by schools provides a centralised on-line collection of school data on complaints of harassment and/or discrimination including sexual harassment and racism.

During this reporting period, ten incidents of racism were recorded on the database, a reduction of one from the eleven incidents in the previous reporting period. Six of the reported incidents were recorded as being resolved, while four were still in the process of resolution. The department is continuing to work with schools to monitor incidents of racism and ensure all incidents are recorded on the central database and resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

The department's *Combating Racism Handbook* and the *Combating Racism in Schools and the Workplace* policy have been updated to incorporate the new procedures for resolution of complaints.

## **Forming genuine and on-going partnerships with Indigenous communities**

### Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB)

Enhanced support to the IECB has occurred through the upgrading of the secretariat officer position in the department's Indigenous Education Section (IES) and realigning the IES Manager's responsibilities. This strategy has assisted in enhancing the effectiveness of the IECB and has strengthened the partnership between the department and the Indigenous community.

The role of the IECB is an essential component of the partnerships between the government and the Indigenous community. The IECB went through a period of transition in 2003 with no more than 13 members of a maximum of 17 members active at any one time. IECB vacancies were advertised late in 2003 and applications considered early in 2004. The appointment of new members will take effect early in the next reporting period.

*Many schools have demonstrated a commitment to developing and featuring aspects of Indigenous culture within their school grounds. An Indigenous themed project to enhance the school environment was initiated at Evatt Primary School through a Discovering Democracy project entitled, Democratic Pathways to Reconciliation. A grant enabled the school to develop native gardens. Local Indigenous artists painted pathways depicting rivers, creeks, a meeting place, the land, and animal foot prints. Two large art panels adorn a front wall of the school, these represent collaborative work by Indigenous artists, staff and students. One panel has the Kite Hawk in its centre, a sunbird of the Ngunnawal people. The Kite Hawk links closely with the eagle, which is the school emblem, as well as the school logo, and motto: "Flying High". A civics education program that includes awareness raising of Indigenous issues complements the project.*

### School Boards and Committees

Results of a survey of all schools/colleges regarding Indigenous school-based committee membership in 2003 showed that:

- Within the 67 primary schools with Indigenous enrolments, four had Indigenous parent representation on their school boards, 39 schools had 134 parents who were members of Aboriginal and Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees, and 10 had Indigenous parent representation on their P&C Committees or who attend meetings regularly.
- Of the 11 high schools with Indigenous enrolments, 10 had ASSPA committees (or were members of cluster ASSPA committees), and one had Indigenous parent representation on their P&C Committees or who attend meetings regularly.
- All five colleges with Indigenous enrolments had ASSPA committees (or were members of cluster ASSPA committees).

The assistance of school boards in actively encouraging Indigenous representation particularly at high school and college level has been sought. The response to this initiative will be monitored throughout 2004.

### Indigenous Education Compact

In June 2003, all preschools, schools and colleges received a copy of the *Indigenous Education Compact*, a signed agreement between the department and the IECB. The Compact describes the commitment both parties will make to the education of Indigenous children and youth. A report on the effectiveness of the Compact over its first year of implementation will be provided by the IECB during the next reporting period.

During this reporting period local Indigenous community members presented the Compact to schools. Copies of the Compact are now displayed in schools and the department. This process was a way of recognising that the commitments within the ACT Indigenous Education Compact were to be seen as core business in the education system.

### Other involvement

The local Indigenous community is represented on the Coordinating Committee that oversees the organisation and implementation of the ACT Drug Education Project under the National Schools Drug Education Strategy. Other members of the committee include representatives of the Australian Federal Police, ACT Health, the ACT Council of P&C Associations, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools and the ACT Department of Education and Training. A major project for the committee this year has been the implementation of professional development for teachers on Resilience Education and Drug Information (REDI), monographs of Innovation and Best Practice in Drug Education, Cannabis and Consequences.

As noted in the previous report, the Indigenous community was significantly involved in the department's redevelopment of the Birrigai educational facility at Paddy's River and the expansion of Birrigai programs to other sites in Canberra, including the Jerrabomberra Wetlands and National Botanic Gardens. A leading member of the IECB was on the reference group for the redevelopment and consultations were held with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. Additional initiatives for the latter part of 2003 included:

- An Environment ACT Indigenous Interpretation Officer working with Birrigai staff to develop and deliver Indigenous Education to school groups engaged in Birrigai programs.
- A meeting between Birrigai staff and the department's Indigenous Education Section to strengthen links to benefit the education of Indigenous students within the ACT.
- The appointment of a teacher with experience in Indigenous Education to develop programs for Indigenous students (with a focus on literacy, numeracy and school retention) and to further develop education about traditional Indigenous culture within Birrigai programs.

The Billabong Aboriginal Corporation's (BAC) Jumby Mulla program received funding from the ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. Funding was provided through the Family Support Program to promote the well being of the Indigenous community by encouraging participation, consultation and involvement in community life. The program works in partnership with the Indigenous community, largely in the Belconnen region, to identify and implement community-based initiatives.

Throughout 2003 BAC continued to develop strong relationships with the Yurauna Centre at

the Canberra Institute of Technology and the Indigenous Education Section. The outcome of this relationship was to ensure the development and delivery of education programs in an appropriate cultural environment that focused on maintaining and encouraging young people to remain in the educational environment.

The Jumby Mulla program has been extended in 2004 to include vocational certificates in Horticulture as well as Organic Bio-dynamic Permi-culture.

*A ten year old Indigenous student with a disability at the Woden School, got off to a flying start this year by being particularly welcoming to a new student at the school. Staff considered the young fellow to be very responsible and an excellent role model for other students. He was awarded Student of the Month for February, and selected to be a member of the school's student council.*



The meeting place at Evatt Primary School

## **Creating safe, supportive, welcoming and culturally inclusive educational and service environments**

### Dare to Lead

Australian principals through their national association have taken on the Dare to Lead program that runs from 2003 to 2005. The program is an initiative of the Australian Principals' Association's Professional Development Council Inc (APAPDC).

At the time of this report, 62 ACT schools have become members of the Dare to Lead coalition of schools around Australia working to make a difference to the lives of Indigenous students.

Schools with Indigenous enrolments who join the program make a formal commitment to achieve, in the case of primary schools, a 10 or more percent improvement in literacy performance levels at year 5 and, in the case of secondary schools, a 10 or more percent improvement in completion rates of recognised year 12 courses. Schools without Indigenous enrolments who join the program make a formal commitment to audit and revise their curricula with a view to ensuring that students develop an informed understanding of

Indigenous peoples and their culture and to actively promote contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Early this year ACT principals met to draw up a range of activities for 2004, including workshops, excursions and presentations. Last November, Linda Burney spoke to principals about ideals, progress and directions for Indigenous education. Linda, a Wiradjuri woman, is best known as the first Aboriginal person ever elected to NSW state parliament. She has a background in teaching and educational policy and planning.

Activities undertaken by ACT schools in the Dare to Lead program will be included as a regular item in this report.

### NAIDOC Student of the Year

The Indigenous Education Consultative body once again sponsored the *ACT NAIDOC Students of the Year* awards, open to all Indigenous students in the Government and Catholic systems. The awards were presented at final year assemblies in 2003. Two winners were selected from 17 finalists, with 15 other nominees also recognised at assemblies. The winners came from Charnwood Primary School and Ginninderra District High School, both government schools.

#### ***ACT NAIDOC Student of the Year 2003 – Primary School***

*I felt so happy when I received my award I felt like crying because I couldn't believe I won it. My Nan, Auntie and cousin were so proud of me and they told me to keep up the good work, which I did. The experience was so great getting all those photos and especially getting out of class work. Meeting Lauren Jackson was the best part of getting the award. She was way taller than me. The odd part was doing the same photo over and over again and hearing my family saying how proud they were all the time.*

***11 year old Indigenous student Charnwood Primary School***

### Local Resources

An example of the commitment to include Indigenous Studies in the curriculum was the production of a series of five storybooks, *Tales from Ngambri History*, for the 5 to 8 years age group. They were produced through the collaborative efforts of local Indigenous families with a contracted writer and historian. A set of the storybooks was distributed to all ACT government primary schools and feedback to the Indigenous Education Section has been positive. The project, which was sponsored by the ACT Government, not only provided Indigenous resources for our schools, but also provided skills training for the local Indigenous people involved.

*My Dad, my brother and myself wrote and illustrated two books from the Ngambri storybooks set. We spent a lot of time doing the books even on weekends. I am very happy about our books because I put a lot of hard work into them. I am very proud because they tell stories of my country. At the launch I was nervous but happy for everyone to see our books.*

***Year 4 student Melrose Primary School***

## Support for transition

Successful student transition from sector to sector, or school to school, is a vital aspect in ensuring that Indigenous students settle well into new environments and remain interested in learning. Towards the end of 2003 Indigenous home/school liaison officers placed particular emphasis on identifying those students who might have difficulty moving into the next phase of schooling, such as to high school or college, and worked with them and their families providing support to minimise any issues. This strategy was continued at the start of the new school year, with officers receiving training in developing strategies to assist students or parents with particular transitional concerns. The attention given to this aspect of support for students by the Indigenous home/school liaison officers is consistent with the establishment of a Student Transition officer position introduced in Term 1 2004.

An Indigenous Transitions Officer has been appointed to support Indigenous students in making a successful transition from Year 10 to 11 and from Year 12 into employment and/or further education. Indigenous Year 10 students who did not enrol in Year 11 were followed up and were encouraged to return to school and 2003 Year 12 Indigenous students were contacted early in 2004 and offered assistance if they were not in further education or employment.

The Indigenous Student Transition officer is monitoring the progress of Year 11 and 12 students and providing appropriate support to ensure positive learning outcomes.

## **Indigenous children and young people achieving outcomes equitable to the total population**

### Entry to School Assessment

All Kindergarten students are assessed on entry to school in the areas of early reading, early mathematics and phonological awareness, using the PIPS (Performance in Primary Schools) assessment. The results of the assessment are used by teachers to plan individual learning programs for students and also by the department to determine the level of additional resourcing to be provided to schools for students in need of support in literacy and numeracy in the early years.

*Table A – PIPS Proportion above minimum standard*

	2002		2003		2004	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Indigenous</b>						
Reading	30	50.8	32	44.4	48	54.5
Mathematics	28	47.5	42	58.3	47	53.4
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>						
Reading	2207	81.3	2066	80.0	2062	78.6
Mathematics	2222	81.9	2109	81.7	2104	80.2

Table A shows the proportion of Kindergarten students whose PIPS raw score was above the cut score in Reading and Mathematics. The cut score is at the minimum standard in Reading and Mathematics expected at the commencement of Kindergarten (school entry).



**Table B – Progress in 2003 of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who commenced school with low skills in reading and mathematics.**

Indigenous students	Mathematics		Reading	
	No	%	No	%
Less than expected progress	13	43.3	14	36.8
Expected progress	14	46.7	17	44.7
Greater than expected progress	3	10.0	7	18.4
Non-Indigenous students				
Non-Indigenous students	Mathematics		Reading	
	No	%	No	%
Less than expected progress	171	33.7	141	26.1
Expected progress	247	48.7	255	47.1
Greater than expected progress	89	17.6	145	26.8

Table B shows the progress of students who were identified at the beginning of 2003 as commencing school with low skills in reading and mathematics. The table shows that in mathematics 57% of Indigenous students in this group made expected or better progress while in reading 63% made expected or better progress between assessments. This is a very pleasing outcome although it was still less than the progress made by non-Indigenous students.

Indigenous students who made less than expected progress in the PIPS Kindergarten assessment receive support through the Learner Assistance program.

#### Early Childhood Education

The participation in early childhood education is a focus for the department and is seen as critical in the enhancement of the literacy, numeracy, social and emotional development of Indigenous children.

The February 2004 census identified 55 Indigenous children enrolled in mainstream preschools, including seven at Jervis Bay Preschool. Thirteen Indigenous children were attending Koori Preschool, and four Indigenous children were enrolled at both mainstream and Koori Preschool.

A total of 72 Indigenous children were participating in preschool sessions in February 2004, compared with 71 in February 2003. However, there is a continuing trend of increasing

Indigenous participation in preschools as the year progresses. During 2003 the number of Indigenous students rose from 71 to a total of 108 students at the August 2003 census. The increase is due to an extension of the Koori Preschool Program into the Narrabundah Early Childhood Centre as well as the improved communications between Indigenous families and preschools, both Koori and mainstream.

The improved communication is the result of stronger networking by the Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers, the involvement of Koori Preschool staff in mainstream preschools and the participation of preschool staff in Indigenous cultural awareness training programs.

*The Wheels on the Bus*

*The Indigenous Education Early Childhood Team joined with the staff at Wanniasa Hills Preschool for their term 1 excursion. An ACTION Bus picked the group up from the bus stop up the road and treated the children and their carers to a tour of the Tuggeranong Bus Depot. They saw where the sick buses were fixed and where the buses slept at night. But the real highlight was going through the bus washing facility. On the way home the bus went through the interchange and along the actual route from there to the preschool. What seemed on the surface to be a simple excursion was much more: children had a valuable experience of a community service, interacted with children from the mainstream preschool group and the special needs class, and enjoyed seeing a different view of the streets of their neighbourhood.*

English as a Second Language (ESL)

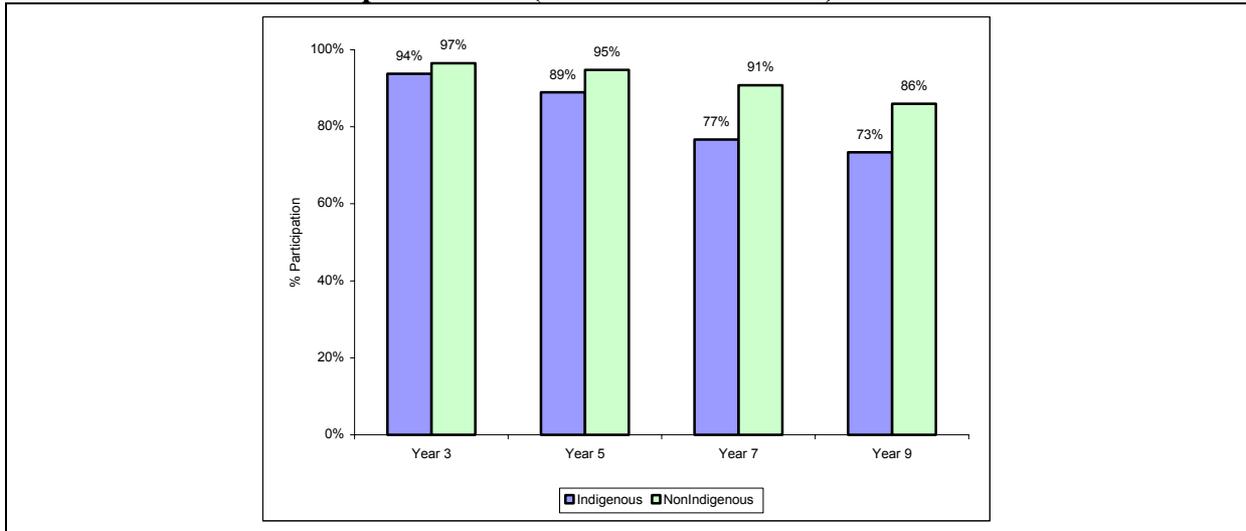
The February 2004 census indicates that 173 Indigenous students in ACT Government schools are receiving an ESL program. This number is an increase from 128 students in February 2003 and partly reflects the greater recognition and better reporting of Indigenous language usage in the ACT.

Literacy and Numeracy

In the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) in 2003 the participation rate for Indigenous students was lower than for non-Indigenous students. In 2004 Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers are working more closely with students, parents and schools to improve the participation rate and targeting the students who are most likely to be absent during testing by distributing information to parents/carers stressing the importance of the student's participation.

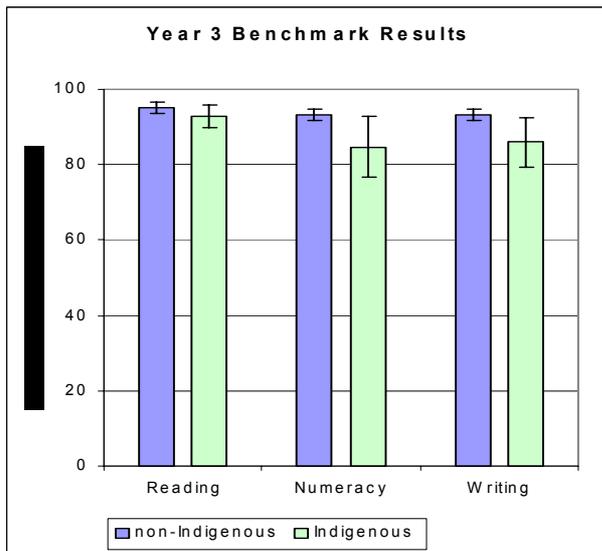
Ensuring greater Indigenous participation will provide a more complete picture of student achievement and ensure that all Indigenous students who require support are identified and assisted.

**Table C: ACTAP Participation 2003 (Government Schools)**

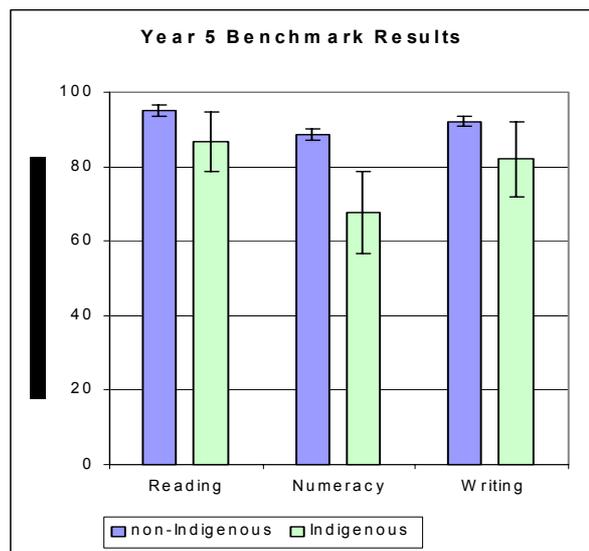


The national benchmark results for Indigenous students in ACT Government schools show marked improvement in all literacy strands for Years 3 and 5 and numeracy for Year 3. While the Year 5 numeracy results were not as good as previous years, the results for Year 5 writing showed a large improvement.

**Table D: Year 3 Benchmark Results**



**Table E: Year 5 Benchmark Results**

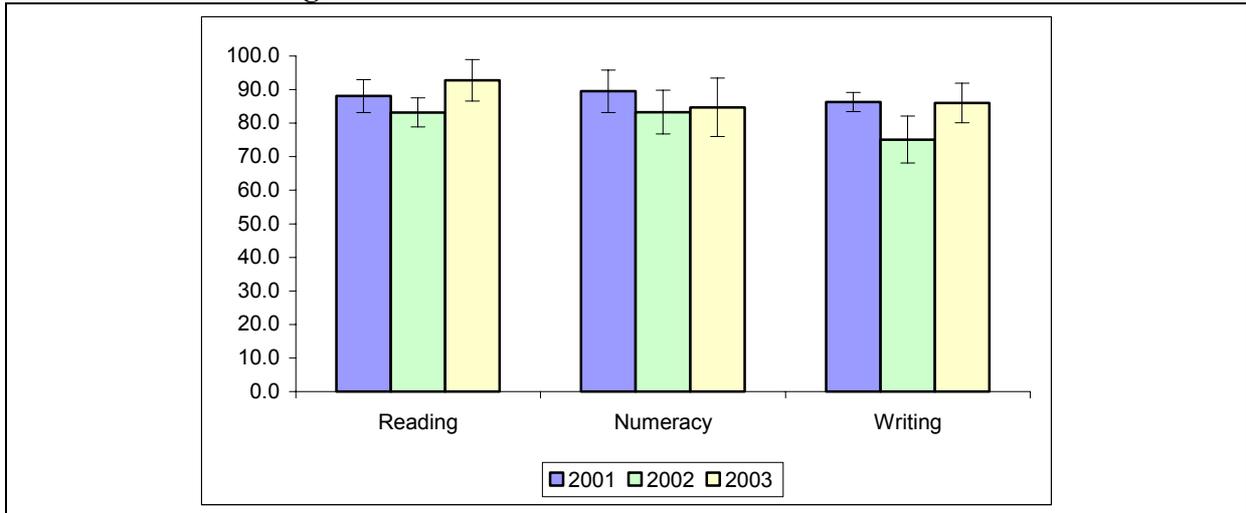


Year 7 Indigenous students' results (Table H) show that writing has been consistent over the last three years. Although, the reading and numeracy results for the 2003 cohort were lower than the 2002 cohort this difference is not statistically significant.

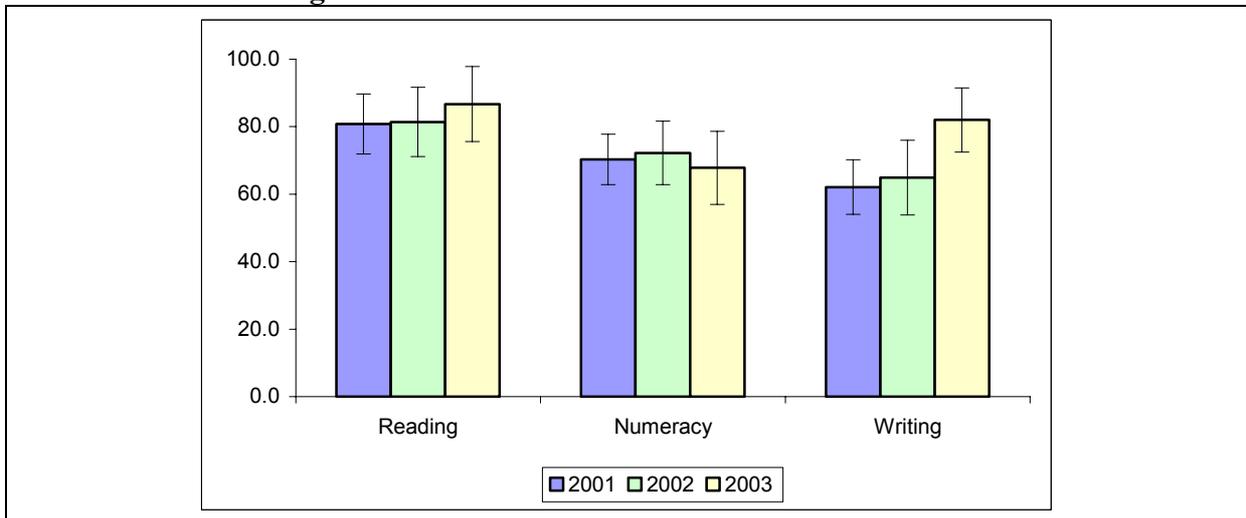
The department, through such initiatives as the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant Program, is moving to redress the situation of Indigenous students whose score fell in the lower 20% of scores. Indigenous students who were below the national benchmark standard will be targeted in the first instance.

The following tables provide a comparison between 2001-2003 of Indigenous students in Government schools whose results were above the benchmarks.

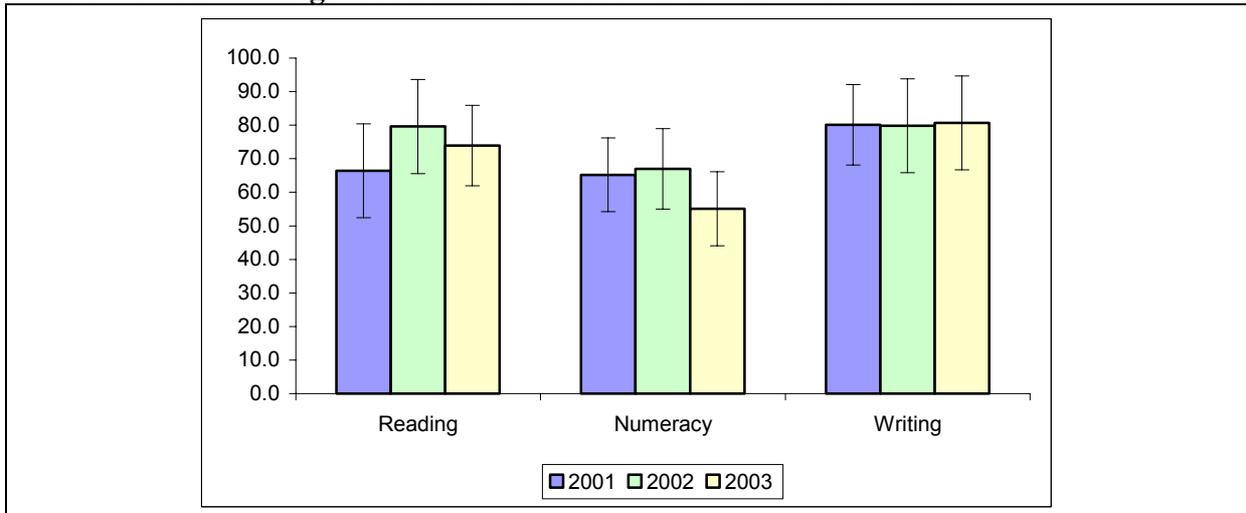
**Table F: Year 3 Indigenous Students Above Benchmark 2001 – 2003**



**Table G: Year 5 Indigenous Students Above Benchmarks 2001 - 2003**



**Table H: Year 7 Indigenous Students Above Benchmark 2001 - 2003**



Note:

The National Benchmarks describe the nationally agreed minimum standards for Reading, Writing and Numeracy at Years 3, 5 and 7. Due to the small number of Indigenous students in each year level there can be large fluctuations between years with large error margins.

*Jervis Bay Primary School participated in the Books in Homes project that aimed to promote literacy awareness and motivate children to read for pleasure. The Books in Homes Association (BiHA) managed the project. Each student at the school was given three new books each term for three terms. Books with an Indigenous theme represented 27% of the titles available. Books that had a connection to a TV show or movie were very popular. The project report states that:*

- *Students are talking more about books and reading to their peers and families more than before.*
- *Families attended the book giving ceremonies.*
- *Siblings are sharing and using the books as well.*
- *The community now has 528 more books in their homes than they did before.*
- *The school library has received 144 new books from BiHA*

### Year 10 and Year 12 retention and certification

In 2003 there were 42 Indigenous students enrolled in year 10. Of these 41 received a Year 10 Certificate.

In 2003 48 Indigenous students completed a Year 12 Certificate from a cohort of 70 who commenced Year 11 in 2002 in government and non-government schools, a retention rate of 69%. This is a vast improvement on the previous year, when only 31 Indigenous students completed a Year 12 Certificate.

More pleasing to note is that of the group of Indigenous students who continued on to Year 12, 91.1% completed their studies. Of these, 16 students also completed the requirements for tertiary entrance compared with 8 students in 2002.

**Table I: Achievements of Students Receiving Year 12 Certificate in 2003**

	Indigenous Students		Non-Indigenous Students	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
UAI 75 or more	4	8%	1391	32%
UAI below 75	12	25%	1283	29%
VET Certificate	15	31%	1033	23%
VET Statement of Attainment	8	17%	832	19%

Note: UAI of 75 or more was required to gain entrance into a local university.

It is also pleasing to note that more Indigenous students are completing vocational qualifications as part of their Year 12 studies. The percentage of Indigenous students with a Year 12 Certificate and a VET Certificate has increased from 23% (7 students) in 2002 to 31% (15 students) in 2003.

### Student Pathways Planning

Student Pathways Planning is being implemented in 2004 for all year 10 students. Student Pathways Planning will provide Indigenous students with an opportunity to explore their unique set of needs and capacities through identifying their personal strengths, interests and goals. This exploration supports their planning of potential pathways through school to further study, training and/or work. Student Pathways Planning supports students to take an active role in shaping their own transitions. It will be extended to all students in years 9 and 11 in 2005.

*‘Many schools are involved in raising the self-esteem and profile of Indigenous students and their heritage in a variety of ways. At the close of 2003, for example, Canberra High School and the Lanyon cluster of schools held honorary events for Indigenous students to recognise their contributions to school life and progress throughout the year. More than 50 Indigenous students took part in the Lanyon event, which included a most entertaining Karaoke segment. Parents, teachers, community members and education staff also attended, to view presentations and offer congratulations’.*

### Vocational Education and Training

The Indigenous People in Vocational Education and Training Committee is a sub-committee of the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB). The Department of Education and Training provides secretariat and research support to this committee, and the input from the committee informs the department’s policy development. This is the vehicle by which the department most clearly involves the local Indigenous community in decision making about those elements of vocational education and training that concern them.

The Department of Education and Training encourages ACT Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to address the skills and knowledge requirements of the Indigenous community. In addition to the provision of funding for mainstream programs, a Strategic Priorities Program is administered. For this latter program contracted RTOs are funded to deliver training to equity and target groups in the ACT community. In the current round, the following programs are being delivered to Indigenous participants:

- Certificate III in Information Technology (Software Applications) – 2 programs, with a total enrolment of 24 participants
- Certificate III in Business – 8 participants
- Certificate IV in Business (Small Business Management) – 2 programs, with a total enrolment of 20 participants
- Certificate I in Horticulture plus competencies from Certificate II in Horticulture – 10 participants
- Pathways Road Ready Course (delivered by an RTO in partnership with the Winnunga Nimmitjah Aboriginal Health Service) – 10 participants

A total of 62 Indigenous students are currently enrolled in identified Indigenous programs at the Canberra Institute of Technology. The number of Indigenous students enrolled in all programs at CIT is available in the Institute’s Annual Report.

Vocational education and training is also provided for Indigenous youth justice detainees in the Quamby Youth Detention Centre.

According to the latest published figures available from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), in the ACT from January-September 2003, there were 90 Indigenous participants in the New Apprenticeships program, a very satisfactory increase from the 2002 figure of 76 participants.

The industry areas in which the greatest numbers of Indigenous apprentices are concentrated are: Government Administration and Defence (20), Property and Business Services (17) and Personal and Other Services (14).

The numbers of Indigenous apprentices and trainees employed in Group Training Organisations in the ACT has also risen, from 8 in 2002 to 13 in 2003. Property and Business Services (8) is the most popular industry area for these employees.

### Post School Options

Last October over 200 ACT Indigenous students from Government high schools and colleges attended the Koori Jobs Challenge with their teachers, held at the Exhibition Centre. This expo covered a vast array of further training and employment opportunities on offer to Indigenous school leavers, and included motivational speakers and activities. The students came away with various ideas for the future.

During this period a new initiative to assist school leavers commenced. This took the form of an Indigenous Student Transition program, whereby an officer worked with 48 Indigenous students in Term 4, 2003 to help them move successfully beyond college. The program impressed both students and parents, resulting in a range of success stories and many others were steered in directions they may not have considered.

### *Characteristics of Indigenous Persons*

*The ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002 provides some positive comparison between Indigenous persons in the ACT aged 15 and over with the rest of Australia:*

	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Attending university or other tertiary institution</i>	<i>13.3%</i>	<i>3.2%</i>
<i>Has a Bachelor degree or above</i>	<i>15.4%</i>	<i>3.3%</i>
<i>Has a Certificate or Diploma</i>	<i>27.6%</i>	<i>21.6%</i>
<i>Total Indigenous persons with a non-school Qualification (a certificate, diploma, bachelor Degree or higher)</i>	<i>44.8%</i>	<i>26.1%</i>
<i>Completed year 12</i>	<i>12.5%</i>	<i>9.9%</i>
<i>Total Indigenous persons with no non-school qualification</i>	<i>55.2%</i>	<i>73.9%</i>

### Enhanced Indigenous Support Program

During the reporting period recruitment for the Enhanced Indigenous Support Program was completed and the north-side and south-side teams of Indigenous Home/School Liaison Officers commenced their extended operations.

The enhanced program included greater support work with schools and Indigenous families in addressing issues of attendance, behaviour and achievement. Visits to schools and families show an increase on the previous reporting period of 134 visits.

As part of the extended program the Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers are to commence a flexible Certificate IV learning program in Community Services in March 2004.

## Students at risk

Representatives of the Indigenous Education Section participate in meetings of the Children's and Youth Interagency Network (CYIN) when particularly needy Indigenous students are discussed. The CYIN collaborates to develop flexible plans for students who are at risk, utilising a full range of government and non-government programs.

Through representation from the Indigenous Education Section, students are referred to appropriate Indigenous support programs and services.

Additional staffing resources are given to schools to support identified Indigenous students. In the latter half of 2003 and early 2004, \$53,760 in extra resourcing was provided to schools to support students requiring assistance in areas such as literacy and numeracy skills, implementation of individual learning programs, retention and attendance.

## Attendance

The following table is a summary of the attendance data of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in term 4 2003 with a comparison of the same period in 2002.

**Table J: Indigenous and non-Indigenous student absenteeism for Term 4 2003**

	<b>Term 4 2002</b>	<b>Term 4 2003</b>
<b>Kindergarten-Year 6</b>		
<b>Indigenous students</b>		
• Average days absent	6.6	4.1
• % missing more than 20% of days in the term	20.4	17.7
<b>Non-Indigenous students</b>		
• Average days absent	3.2	2.2
• % missing more than 20% of days in the term	5.8	6.0
<b>Years 7-10</b>		
<b>Indigenous students</b>		
• Average days absent	12.3	5
• % missing more than 20% of days in the term	51.9	21.1
<b>Non-Indigenous students</b>		
• Average days absent	5.3	1.7
• % missing more than 20% of days in the term	18	4.5

### **Notes**

- There are fewer than 250 Indigenous students in high schools
- The attendance data include all absences (including those for illness and other explained reasons) in line with national reporting practices regarding attendance.

The 2003 data on attendance for Indigenous students is a significant improvement on the previous year, with lower levels of absenteeism than in 2002, and significantly lower levels of absenteeism in high schools, especially in the percentage of students missing more than 20% of days in the term.

However, the proportion of Indigenous students who miss more than 20% of days in the term is a concern. There are a range of reasons for this high level of absenteeism by some students. These are often cultural and include caring for family members, a significant family disturbance, or return to homeland for a period of time. Each of these students is followed up by the Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers and Individual Learning Plans are developed for Indigenous students receiving support.

A number of additional strategies are being considered to address these high absence rates, including a mentoring program, and improved communication and home/school liaison.

The Enhanced Indigenous Support Program came into effect fully in September 2003. This improved model with Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers working more closely in partnership with schools and families to provide stronger support and help to improve attendance rates has not yet been operating long enough to provide a true indication of its longer term success.

A working party to evaluate and monitor the success of this program will be formed during the next reporting period.

### **Conclusion**

The Government's commitment to the improvement of Indigenous student outcomes is reflected in this report through the many and varied programs and initiatives already in place. Overall the results achieved in 2003 are pleasing and confirm that a number of programs and initiatives are making a positive difference to Indigenous students.

While Indigenous student participation and achievement still falls below that of the non-Indigenous community the implementation and further development of initiatives will contribute to the enhanced long-term achievement that is starting to be evidenced. Initiatives such as on line learning, support for transition, increased preschool participation and Student Pathways Planning will assist in re-engaging students in learning and lead to improvements in student suspension and attendance.



*A student of Evatt Primary school*